Shoolman Graduate School of Jewish Education

CG-EDUC-617 Teaching and Studying Biblical Texts:

Challenges and Directions

Fall Semester 2014

Pardes Day School Educators Program (PEP)

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Course Description:

This course will explore the complexities of teaching and studying the Biblical text in the 21st century, as seen through the lenses of contemporary thinkers and educators, Biblical scholars and teachers. Traditional commentary and modern scholarship, Rabbinic midrash and personal interpretation, sacred legacy and moral deliberation are some of the issues that will inform our discussion. Biblical texts representing all genres of Scriptures (narrative; law; wisdom; poetry; prophecy and history) will serve as foci for the greater part of the semester. Participants will be required to work on a particular Biblical text, presenting both their personal study and teaching of that text to fellow participants. A final written project which integrates the application of principles learned is to be submitted at the end of term.

Required Texts and Assignments:

All required readings (along with accompanied questions) and assignments will be posted weekly on Schoology.
Required readings


Additional Readings


Assessment:

Students will be evaluated on

- participation throughout the semester (reading and preparation for class) 30%;

- presentation of chosen text: (study and teaching of text) 30%

- final written project (to be submitted by Jan. 30 2015.) 40%
Course Accommodations for Disabilities:

- Hebrew College is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in programs. Accordingly, if a student has a documented disability, and as a result, needs a reasonable accommodation to attend, participate or complete course requirements, then he or she should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. For further information, see the Student Handbook at http://hebrewcollege.edu/sites/default/files/student_handbook.pdf.

- If you require course accommodations because of a documented disability or an emergency medical condition, please email your instructor as soon as possible. We are happy to work with you on any issues you have to ensure that you can participate fully in the class and complete course requirements. Please do not wait until the assignments are due for a retroactive accommodation, but discuss the situation with your instructor before you experience difficulty.

Course outline:

Unit One: Creating a Language: An exploration of theoretical issues relating to the study and teaching of Biblical texts in the 21st century.

Introduction

- Reflections on the role of the Bible teacher today as outlined by Moshe Greenberg (1928 – 2010), scholar and teacher

- On texts and teachers (a personal view)

A. Traditional commentary and biblical scholarship


- Buber, M. "Saga and History", Moses, the Revelation and the Covenant. New York 1958, pp. 13 – 19.* (The Bible as documented faith: synthesis)
• Greenberg, M. "Exodus and History, Preliminary Reflections", **Understanding Exodus.** Oregon 2013, pp. 155 – 164.* (A holistic view)


B. Sacred heritage and moral, social and religious issues

1. Literary context: Sternberg, M. "Delicate Balance in the Rape of Dinah", **The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and Drama of Reading.** Indiana 1987, pp. 445 – 475.* (The ambiguous text engages the reader in moral deliberation)


4. Genetic context: Dolansky, S. "Magic: For Prophet?", **Now You See It, Now You Don't; Biblical Perspectives on the Relationship between Magic and Religion.** Indiana 2008, pp. 56 -72.* (Inconsistency regarding theological principles is resolved through genetic understanding of text's history: source criticism)
C. Practice: Modes of reading and orientations for teaching


5. Leibowitz, N. "How to Read a Chapter of Tanakh", ibid, pp. 35 – 47.


[readings designated with asterisks are compulsory]

Unit Two: Working it all out - from theory to practice

After our first session (Sept 2), each student will chose a Biblical text which he/she will begin to prepare for a) personal study (through individual or chavruta learning and guided by instructor); and b) for the possible teaching of that text within a particular educational context (designated school and age group). A time frame for presentations will be established immediately after our second session (Sept.9)
The student will present 1) his/her choices of sources for the learning of the text and 2) his/her choices of sources and strategies for teaching of the text, with a rationale for each. These will be discussed and evaluated by fellow students within each session. Suggested texts:

**Narrative:** Genesis: 22 – 23; 24; 25; 27; 31; Exodus: 2; 32; Numbers: 20

**Historical:** Judges 19; 1 Samuel 28; 2 Samuel 12; 13; 2 Kings 4

**Legal:** Exodus 20; 22; Leviticus 19; Numbers 5; Deuteronomy 25: 17 – 19; 26, 1 – 10

**Prophetic:** Exodus 3 – 4:32; 1 Samuel 3; Hoshea; Amos

**Wisdom:** Qohelet 3;4;11;12; Proverbs 1; 10; Job

**Final Project: (to be submitted by Jan. 30th 2015)**

Each student will be required to choose an additional text for study and teaching:

1. Detailed explication of particular textual unit to be taught footnoted with all sources and bibliographical references (or what does this text say and what does it mean?)

2. Articulation of significant issues/ideas/values that are to be focus of learning unit (for particular educational setting) and rationale (or what do I want to teach out of this Biblical unit and why?)

3. Rationale for choice of "pedagogic content knowledge" (for particular educational setting) based upon the above (what will I have to know in order to teach the above?)

4. Rationale for teaching strategies that are coherent with the above (or what are the best activities to teach this text; get these ideas across and to cultivate the appropriate skills?)

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